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Subject: EPA Region 3 Headlines



EPA Region 3 Headlines

Headline	Date	Outlet	Links
DC (14)			
 Tom Steyer is the poster child for liberal hypocrisy ...projects his firm bankrolled will generate tens of millions of tons of carbon pollution for years, if not decades, to come."...	07/22/2019	Washington Examiner Online	Text View Clip
 Chevron Has Spilled 800,000 Gallons of Crude Oil and Water Into a California Canyon Since May ...Newsom fired former DOGGR head Ken Harris after a significant rise in fracking permits. "The Chevron spill clearly shows that California...	07/22/2019	Democratic Underground	Text View Clip
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Gnuville Map ☀ Sunday Good News Roundup

...declared that President Trump's order revoking a sweeping ban on oil and gas drilling in the Arctic and Atlantic oceans is illegal,...



Perspective | She was determined to save the world - one buzzing backyard beehive at a time

07/21/2019 *Washington Post Online, The*

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...that sound so dire - habitat loss; climate change; air, water, and light pollution; disease; and others. The effects...



Analysis | As China's Economy Slows, Why the World Should Care

07/21/2019 *Washington Post Online, The*

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...battles" to reduce China's massive debt pile and clean up toxic air pollution. Retail sales, long a pillar of the economy, aren't growing...



Duke Energy needs to expedite coal power retirement

07/21/2019 *Washington Times Online*

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...utility needs to move faster to retire its aging network of coal-fired power plants and replace them with cleaner, more renewable...



Endangered destinations

07/20/2019 *Washington Post, The*

[Text](#)

...of mostly negative transformative influences. Here we highlight five - climate change, deforestation, erosion, wildlife poaching and...



City urges residents to hydrate, stay cool

07/20/2019 *Washington Post, The*

[Text](#)

...a bandage on his hand and one young girl overheated but quickly cooled by water splashed on her face. Many trash bins began...



Self-driving cars will reshape cities, planners say

07/20/2019 *Washington Post, The*

[Text](#)

...- and correct - the 20th-century mistakes of the auto's reign: congestion, pollution, sprawl and roads designed to move vehicles rather...

DE (5)



At the fair: Junior division duck-callers

07/22/2019 *Middletown Transcript Online, The*

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Finley Jones, Kolin Kaiser and Brock O'Day demonstrate their skills at the DNREC duck-calling competition st the Delaware State Fair.



At the Fair: Flock of geese

07/21/2019 *Sussex Countian Online*

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Just kidding, it's participants warming up for the duck calling contest, hosted by DNREC.



At the Fair: Flock of geese

07/21/2019 *GateHouse Media - Dover, DE Online*

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MD (4)



Boomerang Race continues to grow in popularity

07/22/2019 *Capital Gazette Online*

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...under spinnaker during the opening leg out of the Severn River into the Chesapeake Bay. - Original Credit: (Paul Merenbloom /...



Little Island fight was about protecting the Chesapeake Bay. It's not over yet.

07/22/2019 *Capital Gazette Online*

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...Columns Opinion Jon Mueller: Little Island fight was about protecting the Chesapeake Bay. It's not over yet. By Jon Mueller [...]



What will it take for America to regain the spirit of Armstrong, Aldrin and Collins?

07/22/2019 *Capital Gazette Online*

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...Jul 21, 2019 Jon Mueller: Little Island fight was about protecting the Chesapeake Bay. It's not over yet. Jul 21, 2019 Harry...



Boomerang Race continues to grow in popularity

07/21/2019 *Carroll County Times Online*

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Eastport Yacht Club officials hoped the Boomerang Race would become a Chesapeake Bay tradition when they established the event in 2016....

PA (30)



Fressko's Eco-Friendly Water Bottles Part of the Answer This 'Plastic Free July'

07/22/2019 *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette Online*

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...that encourages millions of people to become the answer to plastic pollution. The people at Fressko have been at the forefront of the...



Two Decades Of Value Delivery And Partnership In Mali

07/22/2019 *Daily Press, The*

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...its 2019 production guidance of 690 000 ounces of gold². Continuing brownfields exploration around its three main orebodies was confirming...



Global High Voltage Equipment Market is Expected to Exhibit a CAGR of 7.4% During the Forecast Period (2019-2027)

07/22/2019 *Daily Press, The*

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...Such types of high voltage equipment offer benefits such as prevention of pollution, increased safety with higher fire point, reduced...



Baker, others appeal ruling in fracking case

07/22/2019 *Citizens Voice Online, The*

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...pressure to inject a large volume of water, chemicals and sand into the Marcellus Shale, causing it to crack and release...



Why does county council give Fitzgerald free rein?

07/22/2019 *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette Online*

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...her opponent in a council race after the two disagreed about natural gas drilling. Daly Danko died before the 2015 election but...



Have hunters no shame?

07/21/2019 *Pocono Record Online*

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...have helped protect wetlands from agricultural and other encroachments and pollution. But an initiative in South Dakota is a throwback to...



Is water company consolidation a good deal for customers?

07/21/2019 *Delaware County Daily Times Online*

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...authority had been looking at solutions to comply with a 2000 U.S. Environmental Protection Agency mandate...



Letter to the Editor: It's time to protect Chester Water Authority, steward of region's resources

07/21/2019 *Delaware County Daily Times Online*

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...them to do their part in conservation of our beleaguered national gem, The Chesapeake Bay. Years ago, after a vicious combination...



Native Hawaiians say telescope represents bigger struggle

07/21/2019 *Daily American Online*

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...Big Island is revered for its consistently clear weather and lack of light pollution. The telescope won a series of approvals from...



Report claims closing nuke plants will cost lives, money

07/21/2019 *Ellwood City Ledger Online*

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...electricity-producing nuclear plants in Pennsylvania and Ohio will cause pollution and related deaths to increase as coal and natural gas...



Should improved internet for rural residents be paid for by a severance tax, borrowing?

07/21/2019 *Meadville Tribune Online, The*

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...access, but no plan will work without the kind of money a new tax on gas drilling would generate, Gov. Tom Wolf said Thursday. The...



Standoff on Hawaii mountain is about more than a telescope

07/21/2019 *Courier-Express Online*

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...Big Island is revered for its consistently clear weather and lack of light pollution. The telescope won a series of approvals from...



Drilling tax for rural internet access

07/21/2019 *Meadville Tribune Online, The*

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Do you favor a new tax on gas drilling to improve high-speed internet for rural residents? First Amendment: Congress shall make no law...



Two Decades Of Value Delivery And Partnership In Mali

07/21/2019 *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette Online*

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Water World: Is water company consolidation a good deal for customers?

07/21/2019 *Delaware County Daily Times Online*

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...authority had been looking at solutions to comply with a 2000 U.S. Environmental Protection Agency mandate...



What consumers can do as regulators weigh compounds' risks

07/21/2019 *Gettysburg Times Online*

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...foam and businesses that work with PFAS are two big sources of water contamination. It's probably impossible to avoid all...



50 years on, space travel captivates us all

07/21/2019 *Daily Item Online*

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...is facing huge, ongoing environmental problems - from widespread ocean pollution, clearcutting and burning of rainforests, long-term...



Critics: Duke Energy needs to expedite coal power retirement

07/21/2019 *Centre Daily Times Online*

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...utility needs to move faster to retire its aging network of coal-fired power plants and replace them with cleaner, more renewable...



Hunting/fishing planner: July 21, 2019

07/21/2019 *Reading Eagle Online*

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...planner: July 21, 2019 Calendar and shoots Report a violation Water pollution: 1-855-Fish-Kil. Fishing violations:...



What consumers can do as regulators weigh compounds' risks

07/21/2019 LNP Online/LancasterOnline.com

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...foam and businesses that work with PFAS are two big sources of water contamination. It's probably impossible to avoid all...



What consumers can do as regulators weigh compounds' risks

07/21/2019 Morning Call Online, The

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...foam and businesses that work with PFAS are two big sources of water contamination. It's probably impossible to avoid all...



Overpopulation is the biggest environmental threat | The Pike County Courier

07/21/2019 Straus News Online

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...houses. This sprawl also threatens our quality of life. Consider water pollution. Developers pave over fertile cropland to...



Fate of buildings offers lessonsWas left to molder for decades while dealing with legal, financial issues

07/20/2019 Morning Call, The

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... Bringing 600 jobs The 100-plus-acre property along a curl of the Schuylkill River on the Chester-Montgomery County border was...



Climate crisis demands action

07/20/2019 Philadelphia Inquirer, The

[Text](#)

...a major bill in which Pennsylvania will promise Wall Street to continue fracking for fossil fuels (mainly natural gas) for an additional...



Natural gas industry bolstering Pa.'s economy Gas

07/20/2019 Patriot-News, The

[Text](#)

...gas exports, advanced manufacturing and petrochemicals. David Spigelmyer is president of the Pittsburgh-based Marcellus Shale Coalition.



ONE-MAN SHOW

07/20/2019 Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

[Text](#)

...her opponent in a council race after the two disagreed about natural gas drilling. Daly Danko died before the 2015 election but still beat...



Emissions atValley plantconcern EPAethylene oxide gas released by B. Braun near LVIA linked to higher risk of cancer

07/20/2019 Morning Call, The

[Text](#)

...than the Sterigenics plant outside Chicago in 2016, the latest year with EPA emission data for both companies. That may change as...



Bethlehem tested drivers at crosswalks -the results weren't good

07/20/2019 Morning Call, The

[Text](#)

...fuel tax - would disincentivize vehicle efficiency, and the associated air pollution and gasoline consumption that come with low mpg...



Assam Floods: People Suffer Post-Flood Miseries in Lakhimpur District

07/20/2019 Sentinel, The

[Text](#)

...were inundated by flood, have been compelled to live in an unhealthy environment after going back from the embankments. The people of...











Heat wave heightens escaping fumes from fire-stricken PES refinery



07/17/2019 Philadelphia Tribune, The

[Text](#)

...Corley told WHYY. "The community is our priority." No 'abnormal' pollution Corley said the refinery is using hand-held air...

	Native Hawaiians say telescope represents bigger struggle	07/21/2019	<i>News & Advance Online</i>	Text	View Clip
	...Big Island is revered for its consistently clear weather and lack of light pollution. The telescope won a series of approvals from...				
	Renewables deserve level playing field	07/21/2019	<i>Daily Progress Online, The</i>	Text	View Clip
	...out direct subsidies (think tax breaks) and indirect subsidies (think air pollution, including greenhouse gas emissions) for fossil fuels....				
	What consumers can do as regulators weigh compounds' risks	07/21/2019	<i>Virginian-Pilot Online</i>	Text	View Clip
	...foam and businesses that work with PFAS are two big sources of water contamination. It's probably impossible to avoid all...				
	A new Dark Age?	07/21/2019	<i>Winchester Star Online, The</i>	Text	View Clip
	...which I feel no guilt. Nor do I feel guilty about the existence of the Chesapeake Bay that was formed some 10,000 years ago (which...				
	'It's a miracle plant' Long linked to oranges, Florida considers a lucrative future - with hemp	07/20/2019	<i>Virginian-Pilot, The</i>	Text	
	...concrete, clothing, batteries. It might even help to solve Florida's algae pollution problem if it's used as a filter, she says. "It's a...				
	Martin Wegbreit column: Evictions ignore the societal costs they impose	07/20/2019	<i>Richmond Times-Dispatch</i>	Text	
	...One major cause of evictions can be explained in eight words: Evictions in Virginia are too easy for landlords. To evict, a landlord...				
	What do I need to know when buying new windows?	07/20/2019	<i>Richmond Times-Dispatch</i>	Text	
	...indicates the window meets energy-efficiency guidelines set by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Energy Star offers a climate-zone...				
	In pursuit of the 'heretics' . . .	07/19/2019	<i>Winchester Star, The</i>	Text	
	...of the various ways in which we may sin these days. Guilt regarding climate change is especially popular. We've even been told that...				

WV (2)

	Apollo 11	07/21/2019	<i>Bluefield Daily Telegraph Online</i>	Text	View Clip
	...is facing huge, ongoing environmental problems – from widespread ocean pollution, clearcutting and burning of rainforests, long-term...				
	What consumers can do as regulators weigh compounds' risks	07/21/2019	<i>Herald-Dispatch Online</i>	Text	View Clip
	...foam and businesses that work with PFAS are two big sources of water contamination. It's probably impossible to avoid all...				

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07/22/2019

Washington Examiner Online

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[Return to Top](#)

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07/22/2019

Democratic Underground

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[Return to Top](#)

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07/22/2019

Democratic Underground

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[Return to Top](#)

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07/21/2019

Washington Post Online, The

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[Return to Top](#)

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07/21/2019

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[Return to Top](#)

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07/21/2019

Washington Post Online, The

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[Return to Top](#)

On Righteous Anger ☼ Close the Camps ☼ Who Won The Week? ☼ Gnuville Map ☼ Sunday Good News Roundup | [View Clip](#)
07/21/2019
Daily Kos

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[Return to Top](#)

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[Return to Top](#)

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07/21/2019
Washington Post Online, The

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[Return to Top](#)

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07/21/2019
Washington Post Online, The

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[Return to Top](#)

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07/21/2019
Washington Times Online

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[Return to Top](#)

Endangered destinations
07/20/2019
Washington Post, The

Travelers with bucket lists tend to see the challenge as limited by their schedule, budget and life span. Increasingly, though, there's a fourth dimension: how much longer a destination or experience, as advertised, will be around for a tourist to enjoy.

Many places are disappearing or transforming before our eyes: Pacific islands succumbing to sea-level rise; the Amazon rainforest withering because of unchecked development; the Gulf of California losing the vaquita porpoise to extinction by poaching.

To be fair, not all factors altering the travel landscape are bad. The modernity that nostalgic backpackers have decried in the Himalaya, for example, also brought first-world medical care to isolated communities. But right now the tourism world is facing a suite of mostly negative transformative influences. Here we highlight five - climate change, deforestation, erosion, wildlife poaching and gentrification - and offer examples of places and experiences that may soon go the way of the traveler's check.

As a tourist, you can help by choosing hotels, tour operators and guides that work to solve some of these problems, not contribute to them, and by interacting with locals to appreciate the challenges they face. The last thing any of us wants is to check off a bucket-list destination only to realize that we're part of the reason it's disappearing.

Climate changeRising seas and melting glaciers have obvious implications for residents and travelers, but so do some events less often tied to climate change, including drought, mudslides, wildfires and shifts in species' range that might, for example, bring mosquitoes - and the diseases they carry - to some regions for the first time in human history.

Due in large part to major coral bleaching events in 2016 and 2017, average hard coral cover is down in all three regions of the 133,000-square-mile Great Barrier Reef for the first time since the Australian Institute of Marine Science began long-term monitoring. As of mid-2018, coral cover in the north region was half of what it was in 2013.

The number of glaciers in Montana's Glacier National Park declined from nearly 150 in 1910, when the park was established, to 26 in 2015, according to the U.S. Geological Survey. More glaciers are likely to disappear in the next few decades. This stunning park offers more than just ancient ice, but the loss has serious implications for the ecosystem and the species that depend on it.

While recent restoration efforts are helping reverse decades of poor water management decisions upstream, the Florida Everglades faces a multipronged threat of drought, excessive air temperatures and elevated salinity from sea-level rise, which not only kills the saw grass prairie but causes the underlying peat soil to collapse - foreshadowing a bleak future for the grasses, fish and other species in the Everglades.**Poaching**Poaching, which feeds a multibillion-dollar illegal wildlife trade, also affects non-target species, says William Laurance, a distinguished professor at James Cook University in Cairns, Australia. The arrival of predatory humans in a formerly pristine area creates "landscapes of fear" among wildlife so that even species that aren't directly targeted bolt at the slightest indication that people are nearby.

Although the mountain gorilla population in central Africa has risen from an estimated 230 in the 1980s to 1,000 today, the species remains critically endangered, says Craig Sholley, senior vice president at the African Wildlife Foundation. "The area has changed dramatically. You're now visiting an island forest surrounded by a sea of people. I'm optimistic about the [gorilla's] future, but 1,000 individuals is a small number, and climate change and disease could wipe them out."

The number of Malayan tigers has dropped from an estimated 3,000 in the 1950s to fewer than 200 today, says Kae Kawanishi, head of conservation for the Malaysian Conservation Alliance for Tigers. Poachers use cable snares to target the critically endangered felines, which can reach 250 pounds. Globally, tigers have lost 93 percent of their habitat.

The black rhino population has risen from a low of 2,300 in 1992 to about 5,500, but the status of the species remains precarious, says CeCe Sieffert, deputy director of the International Rhino Foundation. Travelers have a good chance of seeing wild black rhinos in the Phinda Private Game Reserve in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, through the Malilangwe Trust in Zimbabwe or through Swaziland's big game parks.**Deforestation**An estimated 18 million acres of forest - an area the size of Panama - is felled to make room for development every year, according to the United Nations' Food and Agriculture Organization. At that rate, the world's rainforests could be wiped out in 100 years.

Across the Congo Basin in Africa, new roads are dicing up ecosystems and opening once-pristine woodlands to slash-and-burn farmers and poachers. "This is bad development," says Laurance, in part because widespread corruption prevents any benefit from reaching the local people. The effects are most severe in Nigeria, Equatorial Guinea, Cameroon, the Congo Republic, eastern Congo. "A lot of sub-Saharan Africa is changing at an incredible pace. If you want to see natural Africa, you'd better go now."

In Brazil's Pantanal, the world's largest wetland at 70,000 square miles, the conversion of forest to soy fields and other farms, coupled with other activity, such as diverting rivers and streams that feed the vast river basin, threatens an area with biodiversity that rivals the Amazon.

The forests of Borneo are being leveled for timber, palm oil, pulp, rubber and minerals, says the Worldwide Fund for Nature. Within Indonesia, the amount of land used for palm oil production grew from 1.5 million acres in 1985 to nearly 30 million acres today. Erosion While change is the one real constant, humankind, in our eternal quest for near-term gratification, has managed to accelerate the process in some places.

Built in 1860, the mud and brick Telouet Kasbah housed one of Morocco's richest men - Thami El Glaoui - who, despite predating the Clash, routinely rocked his Kasbah with wild parties. In part because he sided with the French in Morocco's independence fight, the state has not invested in restoring his fortress and only one section, run by Glaoui's descendants, remains accessible to tourists. Wind, rain and time have reduced the rest nearly to rubble.

The mother lode of silver inside the 15,800-foot Cerro Rico gave rise to the city of Potosi, Bolivia, which in the 1500s became the richest city in the world. But the crude tunnels dug to extract that wealth, apart from killing thousands of miners over the centuries, have left the mountain at risk of collapsing. A government stabilization project to save it might be too late.

Erosion of the soft chalk of the White Cliffs of Dover, in England, has increased from about an inch per year to about 10 times that over the past 150 years, according to a 2016 study published in the journal Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America. That's enough to threaten some cliff-top paths and infrastructure, says Robert Anderson, professor of geological sciences at the University of Colorado at Boulder and a study co-author. Further, he adds, "cliffs do not walk back . . . at a steady clip [and] may locally jump several meters at a time," which could elevate the risk unpredictably. Gentrification The effects of gentrification on travelers - my favorite dim sum cart is GONE! - pale in comparison to the challenge faced by residents pushed out by unaffordable rents or, in extreme cases, bulldozers. In an increasingly populous and hyper-informed world, fewer and fewer pockets of desirable land will escape the notice of developers.

In Kenya, Lamu earned renown as one of the most authentic Swahili settlements in East Africa. But because of its strategic location - near Ethiopia and South Sudan - Lamu is now the site of a huge port project that will bring "more ships, more roads, more pollution, and the idyllic paradise that is Lamu will disappear," says Harriet Constable, a journalist and expert on the area.

The one-square-mile neighborhood of Oakwood established its identity in the 1930s and '40s as the only area of Venice, Calif., where African Americans were allowed to buy property. Oakwood's community vibe began to dissolve around 2012 when developers and tech millionaires saw gold in the timeworn houses a few blocks from the Pacific Ocean. A dwindling core of old-timers is fighting to salvage the neighborhood's culture.

For decades, the vendors of Vietnam's Mekong Delta have plied produce and crafts from boats; floating markets became colorful, chaotic must-see stops for travelers. But government flood-control projects have altered the delta, hindering vendors' ability to quickly move between farms and customers, and other urbanization - including gleaming supermarkets - have siphoned business from the rivers. Many floating markets are only half as big as in their heyday.

travel@washpost.com

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[Return to Top](#)

City urges residents to hydrate, stay cool

07/20/2019

Washington Post, The

The temperatures hadn't even reached their peak for the weekend, but District medics Mario Bartee and Christopher Pinto knew what was coming. From their spot in their utility vehicle - a partially enclosed metal cart without air conditioning and with a covered bed in the back - they watched as visitors trudged the Mall through shimmering, hot air.

The crowd for the Apollo 11 anniversary celebration wasn't as large as the two thought it would be Friday, and they hadn't seen as many patients as they initially expected: one child needing a bandage on his hand and one young girl overheated but quickly cooled by water splashed on her face. Many trash bins began overflowing with emptied plastic water bottles and Gatorade containers.

Like emergency responders around the area, they braced for the heat still out there as the District, along with most of the country, faced a weekend of stifling temperatures and humidity that could challenge records.

Numerous cities put their heat emergency plans in place, opening cooling centers, extending pool hours and canceling outdoor events.

By Saturday at 11 a.m., the District sat in the low 90s with a heat index of 103. The temperature was predicted to climb throughout the day to reach a high of 98, with a heat index of 110 to 115.

As of Saturday morning, officials said there were 111 total heat-related calls to the D.C. fire department since July 1. Other than the Fourth of July, the past three days have seen the largest spike.

The waters, too, were warming.

Pete Piringer, spokesman for Montgomery County Fire and Rescue Services, said the water temperature in the Potomac River was over 80 degrees by 11 a.m. Saturday. The Montgomery County swift water rescue team checks river conditions every day for levels, water and air temperatures, and other conditions, Piringer said.

Downstream, at Lewisetta, Va., near where the Potomac River enters the Chesapeake Bay, the water temperature at about 12:30 p.m. Saturday was 85, according to the National Centers for Environmental Information.

Hikers out on the already demanding Billy Goat Trail faced an added challenge Saturday, with a few overcome by heat exhaustion.

Seven or eight other people were evaluated for heat stress on the trail, Piringer said. Members of a family who were trying to cool off in the river water were rescued by boat "so they didn't have to walk out," he said, and one or two others were taken to a hospital for heat exhaustion.

He said a sign has been placed near the trail entrance warning hikers not to hike between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m.

At the National Zoo, keepers put fans out to help cool the cows in the farm exhibit and ran water hoses out so the red river hogs could make refreshing mud wallows, said senior curator Bryan Amaral.

The big cats have tasty "bloodsicles" to cool their palates; they also have access to pools, which the tigers like, but the lions don't.

The elephants also have pools, from which they will draw water with their trunks, splash it on dirt, mix it up with their feet and toss the resulting mud over their bodies to cool off, he said.

As for the American Bison, their heavy coats provide a layer of insulation that protects them from the heat.

If it gets too hot, many of the animals can come inside where it is air-conditioned, Amaral said.

Jen and Wayne Taylor and their three sons went to the Mall on Friday from their home in Bel Air, Md., to visit the museums ahead of the scorching heat predicted for the rest of the weekend.

Still, Jen Taylor said they felt the heat and made sure to stay hydrated and inside the air-conditioned museums for as long as possible.

"We haven't been outside for very long periods at a time, luckily," she said. "We mostly just walk between museums and the Metro."

Cousins Alexis and Danielle Kelly visited the District from Florida with 24 of their family members. They all walked through the Mall wearing matching baby-blue shirts that read, "I make family moves."

"It's hotter here than it is in Florida," Danielle Kelly, 34, said.

"It's not good," said their 7-year-old cousin Ayden Singer. "I can't move."

The family came prepared with plenty of water, Gatorade and small portable fans.

As they were standing near the Smithsonian Metro station, Alexis said she was starting to get a headache, and that's

when they knew it was time to head back to the hotel Friday.

"So we can go to the pool!" Ayden said excitedly.

"You can't prevent [heat-related calls], so the only thing to do is mitigate," Deputy Fire Chief Derron Hawkins said.

That's why the department stocked extra water and ice packs on emergency vehicles, and it has a plan for large-scale heat casualties that could result at events like the Apollo 11 anniversary celebration.

If many people suffered heat-related problems, Hawkins said, the department can bring in buses with air conditioning. Event coordinators can also set up cooling stations around the Mall where visitors could stand in front of fans blowing misty water.

When it comes to heat-related complaints, Hawkins said many people will not need to go to a hospital: They simply need to cool off.

During the Fourth of July, there were nearly 200 people who visited medical tents, but only 29 needed to be transported.

"That's how you know these plans are making a difference," Hawkins said.

"You can be the healthiest person in the world, but if you don't drink water, you can be on that list," Pinto said.

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Michael E. Ruane contributed to this report.

[Return to Top](#)

Self-driving cars will reshape cities, planners say

07/20/2019

Washington Post, The

Imagine a future with half the parking but far more open space

As self-driving vehicles begin to transform the way people get around, urban planners around the country are beginning to think about how they will remake cities and change the way we live.

Not since the Model T replaced the horse and buggy have transportation and cities faced such an extensive transformation. Many planners say they see an opportunity to prevent - and correct - the 20th-century mistakes of the auto's reign: congestion, pollution, sprawl and roads designed to move vehicles rather than people.

"In one way, cars kind of happened to cities," said Brian T. Kenner, the former deputy mayor for planning and economic development for the District, who recently left his job with the city to work for Amazon.

"There were a lot of lessons learned. . . . We know autonomous vehicles are going to happen in the future - one question is how quickly - but we want to make sure we're at least thinking about the impacts they could have on the built environment," Kenner said.

For example, because driverless vehicles will drop off passengers and move on, prime real estate now consumed by vast parking lots and unsightly garages could be freed up for more housing, parks, public plazas and open space, planners say.

In Cincinnati and Los Angeles, some new parking garages have flat floors and higher ceilings so they can be easily converted into apartments or office space as the demand for parking dwindles.

Last year, Chandler, Ariz., became one of the first U.S. cities to rewrite its zoning code to facilitate autonomous vehicles. Developers may now qualify to build less parking - a major cost savings - if they provide curbside passenger loading zones with benches and trees for shade.

Chandler planning manager David De La Torre said the Phoenix suburb, where Waymo has tested autonomous vehicles

since 2016, hopes to someday replace parking lots with more attractive options, such as open space and parks.

"This is an opportunity to make our city more beautiful by eliminating huge parking lots and doing something more aesthetically pleasing," De La Torre said. "It's an evolution from an auto-oriented society to a more pedestrian-oriented society."

In Washington's Maryland suburbs, planners in Montgomery County will try to predict the effects of autonomous vehicles on the local transportation network as they update the county's 30-year general plan.

"We're trying to be flexible with our thinking," said David Anspacher, a transportation supervisor for the county's planning department. "We know a change is coming, but until we actually see a big adoption of the technology, there's a lot of debate about the changes it will bring."

If thought out, planners say, autonomous vehicles could increase car-sharing, which would reduce traffic congestion and air pollution. Because the technology will allow these vehicles to travel closer together, they will take up less lane space. Planners say cities could use the extra space for bike lanes and wider sidewalks, making walking and biking safer and more appealing. In addition, by making it easier to forgo owning a car, living in cities and close-in suburbs would become more attractive and affordable, they say.

But some say driverless vehicles could also worsen those problems, particularly if they're priced affordably enough to make them wildly popular and encourage solo driving. Another concern is the potential for what some planners have dubbed "sprawl on steroids." A two-hour commute becomes less onerous if travelers can nap, watch a movie or hold a business meeting rather than fume behind the wheel.

Some also worry that driverless vehicles could undermine years of work to curb traffic-inducing sprawl by focusing development around transit. People who can catch a ride door-to-door might not want to walk to or wait for buses and trains, let alone pay premium rents to live or work near subway stations.

A 'renaissance' in urban design

Most experts predict widespread adoption of autonomous vehicles will take 20 to 30 years, depending on their safety record, affordability and the public's willingness to cede control to computers. But urban planners who plot out communities decades in advance and architects who design buildings for the next 50 to 100 years have already begun to wrestle with critical questions: How much parking will autonomous vehicles require? Will most people own them or buy into a car-sharing service? How much more will people travel when they don't have to drive?

Tim Chapin, dean of social sciences and public policy at Florida State University, said planners know the "built environment" tends to be "very sticky" and slow to change, especially compared to the pace of technology.

"I think autonomous vehicles are potentially a force for people-centered design," said Chapin, who has written on the issue. "We can remake our cities and suburbs for humans rather than vehicles. I think there's a real opportunity here - if we do it well."

Andy Cohen, co-chief executive of Gensler, a San Francisco-based design firm, said he sees automated vehicles sparking a "renaissance" in urban design.

"People have been so focused on the technology part," Cohen said. "But we see them as a way to create great spaces for people and not for cars. . . . We can now go back and redesign our cities for the future."

While many planners say they are concerned about the prospect of "zombie cars" roaming the streets in search of passengers, adding to traffic, they're thrilled with the prospect that driverless vehicles won't need to park close to their users. That would allow garages to be moved to less expensive outlying or industrial areas, leaving city centers for pedestrians and cyclists. Cars could park behind strip malls, allowing suburban roads to be lined with grass and landscaping. Because autonomous vehicles can be packed together when parked - there's no need to open a driver's door - garages and lots would potentially eat up significantly less land.

Meanwhile, residents could reclaim driveways for bigger yards and exchange garages for more living area.

"We can build more dense urban places that look like cities before automobiles, before we had to warehouse all these cars," said Grady Gammage Jr., a land-use attorney for developers in Phoenix.

Shaping the future

In Boston, where autonomous vehicles have been tested since 2016, a recent study by the World Economic Forum and the Boston Consulting Group found that self-driving vehicles will require about half of the city's current parking. That space could be used for transit vehicles, protected bike lanes and other "human-focused" purposes, said Kris Carter, co-chair of the mayor's office of new urban mechanics.

"You can imagine all the things that become available when we need half the space that we have for parking today," Carter said.

So what happens to all the windowless garages beneath office and apartment buildings?

Cohen, the California architect, said his firm tells clients they can "future-proof" their buildings with massive pickup and drop-off zones and aboveground garages that can be easily converted to residential or office space.

"What will you do with all that dark space" underground? Cohen said. "There are only so many athletic clubs and data centers you can put in there."

Bryant Foulger, a developer based in the District, said accommodating autonomous vehicles is "very much part of our thinking." His company plans to expand pickup and drop-off areas around the former Discovery building in downtown Silver Spring, which his company recently bought.

Foulger said he's also thinking about how door-to-door self-driving vehicles might eat into transit use - and the premium rents that developers can now charge near subway stations.

"Will tenants be willing to pay the higher price to be near a Metro station?" Foulger said. "That's a really valid and big question."

When the University of Maryland's National Center for Smart Growth Research and Education recently modeled how the Washington-Baltimore region might grow, researchers cited residents' use of autonomous vehicles as a key force.

Self-driving vehicles, they found, would cause residents to take more trips, use transit less and live farther out. Many of the additional trips, researchers said, would come from those who can't drive, particularly children, the elderly and people with disabilities.

Whether that additional travel results in more traffic congestion, researchers have found, will depend heavily on how much residents share cars and how much road space is freed up from vehicles traveling closer together.

"People are speculating and running models, but no one knows how cheap autonomous vehicles will become and whether people will choose to reduce private ownership to some degree or be willing to share a vehicle," said Uri Avin, a research professor at the center. "Everyone is guessing about future behavior and costs."

Carter, of Boston, said he's not as concerned as some planners about the potential for super sprawl because most people don't like to be regularly confined for long trips.

"The critique we hear in Boston is autonomous vehicles might allow people to move to somewhere like Vermont and commute in every day," Carter said. "I don't think that's true. . . . I think human nature historically suggests we don't have a desire to do that."

Even so, some planners are considering ways that governments could discourage such behavior, for example, via a per-mile tax to make driverless vehicle passengers feel and bear the costs of longer trips. Such a tax, supporters say, also might discourage empty vehicles from adding to traffic congestion by roaming streets in search of passengers.

Unless cities pay close attention to how self-driving cars will shape their futures, experts say, they could easily repeat, and exacerbate, mistakes of the past.

"What we didn't do a century ago with the auto was think about the impacts on our landscape," said Chapin, the Florida State University professor. "We're smarter now, and we can think about what we want our autonomous vehicle landscape to look like."

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[Return to Top](#)

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[Return to Top](#)

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[Return to Top](#)

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[Return to Top](#)

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[Return to Top](#)

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[Return to Top](#)

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[Return to Top](#)

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[Return to Top](#)

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[Return to Top](#)

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[Return to Top](#)

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[Return to Top](#)

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[Return to Top](#)

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[Return to Top](#)

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Fate of buildings offers lessonsWas left to mold for decades while dealing with legal, financial issues**07/20/2019*****Morning Call, The***

SPRING CITY - In a secluded and sprawling array of hulking, derelict brick buildings about 35 miles south of Allentown, years have been spent in search of two intangibles.

One is paranormal activity.

Seekers who have poked about the former Pennhurst State School and Hospital include film crews from the Travel Channel and the TV show "Ghost Hunters."

The other is a key to economic activity.

That second long-running quest, observers say, may hold helpful clues for Allentown, which has its own sprawling complex of massive, empty buildings at Allentown State Hospital.

The Allentown locale was the focus of fast-paced action in Harrisburg recently. Within 30 days, a bill that would allow demolition of the hospital buildings and the sale of the property was introduced, passed with almost no opposition in the Legislature and, on July 2, signed into law by Gov. Tom Wolf.

Both Pennhurst and Allentown were state-owned and operated through their active years. Their empty shells stand as a stark reminder of how society once believed the best way for dealing with people with certain challenges was to segregate them.

Both opened before World War I, functioned for decades with thousands of residents, and closed - Pennhurst in 1986, Allentown in 2010.

Among their many differences is that Allentown's buildings appear to be in far better condition than Pennhurst's, which were neglected so badly that some are not safe to enter.

Beyond that, Allentown was a psychiatric hospital in a city. Pennhurst was an isolated, state-run community where people with developmental disabilities were warehoused, neglected and abused in such horrific fashion that a federal lawsuit led to the facility's closure.

And unlike Allentown, significant steps have been taken toward redeveloping Pennhurst.

Bringing 600 jobs

The 100-plus-acre property along a curl of the Schuylkill River on the Chester-Montgomery County border was turned over to private owners more than 10 years ago.

More recently, the Pennhurst property was the focus of a \$10 million state grant and loan package awarded to the Chester County Economic Development Council, which is working with the Pennhurst property owner and developer.

The money must be used for environmental remediation, demolition, roads and streets, excavation and grading, and engineering, according to MaryFrances McGarrity, a council senior vice president.

Such funding is intended to "kick-start these big, challenging projects," she said.

In the past few weeks, a request for proposals was issued for demolition work. McGarrity said she believes no more than a few of the 21 buildings on the site would remain, though she couldn't say how many.

The goal is to make the property "shovel ready" for private business or industry, according to McGarrity. Given the size of the former Pennhurst property and the buildings on it, she said, the project could end up being valued at \$100 million.

The first thing that had to be done was to identify environmental concerns, she said. It turned out that asbestos in the buildings was the No. 1 hazard.

Remediation is underway, she said. After that, a master plan will be created, and that process will involve East Vincent Township.

The township manager, Mary Flagg, knows a lot about both the Pennhurst and Allentown properties. Her mother once worked in housekeeping at Allentown State Hospital, and the Pennhurst saga has become part of her professional life after 16 years on the job. There is a huge difference between the buildings at each site, she said. "Allentown State Hospital is pristine," and Pennhurst "was left to rot."

The Pennhurst property is zoned industrial mixed use, Flagg said, but the township would entertain any proposal to rezone it.

Told that the state projected the development could bring 600 jobs, she said, "I would hope at least that."

So far, though, the township has heard little from the site's owner, Derek Strine. "We have no idea what he wants to do at this time," Flagg said. "He has told us nothing."

Strine took possession of the property last year, after a process that involved buying a loan associated with the property from a bank.

Pennhurst closed its doors for good in 1986. Although large pieces of the property were transferred to other entities, not until 2008 was the lower campus sold to a developer.

A "haunted asylum" Halloween attraction began operating on the property in 2010. But no substantial development had been accomplished when Strine took possession.

For years after Pennhurst closed, little was done to secure the property.

"Lots of vandalism. Lots of fires. Lots of condoms and liquor bottles," Strine said.

On a recent tour, an employee cautioned about getting too close to a three-story building dating to 1908 called "Vincennes," in which an interior stairwell had collapsed. A two-story structure from the same time period called "Philadelphia" had roof holes so large the sky could be seen through them.

But several other buildings - including at least one used for the Halloween attraction - have been remediated and are in much better condition.

"The challenges of buying a large, complicated, formerly state-owned facility are daunting," Strine said.

One of the most daunting challenges is preservation.

The Allentown hospital property, set on nearly 200 acres, costs more than \$2 million a year for the state to maintain.

Dating to 1912, it is listed on the Pennsylvania Register of Historic Places and is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places.

Nat Hyman, an Allentown developer who sued to stop an earlier plan to demolish the complex, said tearing down the hospital would mean a loss of history and beautiful architecture.

A review by the state Historic Preservation Office found that some of the buildings may be viable for rehabilitation and reuse, and more than 5,000 people signed an online petition backing preservation of the buildings.

Lehigh County Republican state Sen. Pat Browne, who sponsored the bill to demolish the hospital and put it up for sale, said the property's value will increase after demolition. Reusing the buildings, he contends, is not economically feasible. The demolition and sale, however, could become a model for the state as it contemplates action on many other old, state-owned properties.

Glimpsing the past

The history of inhumane conditions at Pennhurst has been a prime topic in the long-running debate about its future.

"Real trauma and atrocities. Physical and psychological violence. Sexual assault," said Dennis Downey, emeritus professor of history at Millersville University and co-author of a forthcoming book on Pennhurst and the rights of the disabled.

In 2008, the Pennhurst Memorial & Preservation Alliance formed in part to advocate for sensitive reuse of the site.

According to the alliance, construction on what was first known as the Eastern State Institution for the Feeble-Minded and Epileptic took place between 1903 and 1908, and the first patient entered in November 1908.

Eugenics, which advocated a since-debunked set of beliefs that held that undesirable traits in humans could be diminished or eradicated by selective breeding, helped shape the institution's growth.

According to the alliance, a 1918 report to the Pennsylvania Legislature included the facility's chief physician's quoting of a leading eugenicist, who said, "Every feeble-minded person is a potential criminal."

There is a growing sentiment that financial benefits from repurposing such places should aid disabled people who have the same challenges as the populations once housed in the facilities, said Sheryl Larson, a University of Minnesota researcher and expert on institutions for people with developmental disabilities.

James W. Conroy, who is co-president of the alliance, toured the country to see what had been done at other old institutions. Directing money from their sale or reuse toward services for disabled people has been done elsewhere, he said.

"It is an absolute piece of justice," he said.

Conroy said he and others spent three years trying to come up with a viable reuse plan for Pennhurst. Other states have had success with multiuse development - meaning a mix of things such as stores, condos and restaurants, he said. But attempts to bring about large-scale reuse of Pennhurst's buildings were thwarted, in part, by a bad economy. Meanwhile, the buildings continued to deteriorate.

Conroy, who worked with Downey on the soon-to-be-published book, said that whatever happens on the former Pennhurst property, its past must be respected.

Already, a museum is being put together in a lower level of a 45,000-square-foot building built in 1909. It includes dining trays, signs, a wheelchair, a mock laundry room and other remembrances of the lifestyle lived by the thousands of residents.

Pennhurst has a designation as an International Site of Conscience. It was given by an international coalition that supports preserving sites whose troubled histories can help society avoid mistakes in the future.

"It is a human rights site," Downey said.

Pennsylvania's efforts to support preservation are not enough, given its rich collection of historic locations, according to Nathaniel Guest, a founder of the Pennhurst preservation group.

Guest, now chairman of the board of Preservation Pennsylvania, a nonprofit that protects historic and architecturally significant resources, said Pennhurst's buildings were usable when the facility first closed. After years of neglect, he said, a report indicated it would take \$400 million to bring them back to usable condition.

That's not the case with Allentown State Hospital, Guest said.

"It is breathtaking and, unlike Pennhurst, it hasn't gone through a decade and a half of neglect," he said. "And yet, here we are, we are going to lose it."

Downey noted that even though Allentown State Hospital took care of a distinctly different population than Pennhurst, it was nonetheless an institution.

"You don't necessarily have to preserve the entire complex," he said. "But there ought to be a memorial. It should be remembered for the size and scope of the institutionalization that took place."

Morning Call reporter Ford Turner can be reached at 717-783-7305 or orfturner@mcall.com

About the facilities

Pennhurst State

School & Hospital

- * Opened: 1908
- * Type: For the developmentally disabled
- * Peak population: 3,500 in 1955
- * Size: About 120 acres, 20 buildings
- * Closed: 1986

Allentown State Hospital

- * Opened: 1912
- * Type: Psychiatric hospital
- * Peak Population: 1,966 in 1947
- * Size: 195.2 acres, 28 buildings
- * Closed: 2010

[Return to Top](#)

Climate crisis demands action

07/20/2019

Philadelphia Inquirer, The

When it comes to taking climate change seriously in Pennsylvania, there's no day like today. No, seriously ... have you been outside?

Philadelphia's heat index is steadily rising toward a Death Valley-like reading of "feels like" 110 or more this weekend - the worst heat wave in at least seven years and possibly longer than that. And forecasters say that this time the nighttime lows will be even higher than usual - that's a calling card of a warming planet - and will put older, less-advantaged city residents at risk.

With July traditionally the warmest stretch of the year, most climatologists say we're right now experiencing the hottest month in human history. And this is happening, by the way, as a major ice sheet in Antarctica is about to break off and speed up rising sea levels, and as scientists confirm what everyone suspected, that there's a direct link between climate change and deadly California wildfires.

The good news in Harrisburg is that House lawmakers finally have a "Pennsylvania Climate Caucus" committed (on paper, anyway) to stopping planetary warming in its tracks. The bad news? The overwhelming number of the 60 or so state House Democrats who belong to this "climate caucus" are supporting (and in many cases have cosponsored) a major bill in which Pennsylvania will promise Wall Street to continue fracking for fossil fuels (mainly natural gas) for an additional 20 years, if not longer. That is at least nine years past the date - 2030 - that a U.N. panel warned of "catastrophic climate change" unless carbon pollution is sharply reduced.

"We lack a bold climate plan that addresses all of the challenges we face right now," said first-term State Rep. Elizabeth Fiedler of South Philadelphia. The plan we have instead is called Restore Pennsylvania, and Gov. Tom Wolf - who's lined up a number of cosponsors in both parties - is planning a major push in the fall. Although the Democratic governor has pushed unsuccessfully for a severance tax on fracking - every other major oil- and gas-producing state has one - since taking office in 2015, the new \$4.5 billion plan is the first one tied to major infrastructure projects like roads, bridges, and sewer plants, and it looks to have a better chance of success.

That's not music to the ears of the environmental groups called the Better Path Coalition that are aggressively fighting Wolf's proposal, mainly because it would require Pennsylvania to continue drilling for and producing fossil fuels at a healthy rate for at least two more decades to pay off the bonds that would fund the infrastructure work.

"There continues to be this failure to connect the dots," said Karen Feridun, who founded an anti-fracking group called Berks Gas Truth and is a cochair of the Better Path Coalition.

In recent weeks, the Better Path Coalition has been waging an active campaign - on Twitter, Facebook, and elsewhere - to convince members of the Pennsylvania Climate Caucus that while additional taxes on the oil-and-gas industry seemed like an environmentally sound idea 10 years ago, the accelerating global-warming crisis demands a different kind of response.

Some have pushed back - most notably Democratic Rep. Ryan Bizzarro of Erie. He's a member of the climate caucus but got into a heated back-and-forth on his Facebook page with environmentalists - insisting that while he's not "profracking," the demands of the Better Path Coalition are unrealistic and perhaps naive.

"I'm 'pro-have an actual idea of how our economy in Pennsylvania works,' " Bizzarro shot back. "I wish others had that sense too before they talked about bans, rainbows, and ponies."

Wolf and his aides have also stressed that Restore Pennsylvania includes considerable dollars for environmental work, including funding for renewable energy projects. But Wolf and the rest of Harrisburg seem stuck in a 2011 mentality, where at least natural gas is cleaner than coal, where wind and solar seem still far off in the future (they aren't), and where fracking is seen as a job creator (actually, not so much) that liberals can tax to fix crumbling schools and bridges.

In 2019, the world is on fire - at least the parts that aren't flooded by more powerful storms or by rising seas. It's great that Pennsylvania doesn't have a climate-denial governor like so many "red states" to our south or west, but this growing crisis means it's time to channel our inner JFK and stop doing things because they are easy (like finally, years late, joining the U.S. Climate Alliance) and start doing things to save the planet because they are hard. A vote for fracking in Pennsylvania in 2039 is a vote for making today's blast-furnace weather the New Normal.

This month's climate tip: Unplug your dryer. In January I promised to write a column about climate change every month (7 for 7!) and to try to cut through the doom and gloom with something simple you can do to alleviate global warming. Something I do when the weather gets hot (although maybe not this humid) is hang laundry out to dry instead of running the dryer and burning up electricity. wbunch@inquirer.com

215-854-2957 will_bunch

[Return to Top](#)

Natural gas industry bolstering Pa.'s economy Gas

07/20/2019

Patriot-News, The

With better-than-expected tax revenue collections and more than 6 million Pennsylvanians employed in the workforce, an all-time high, the commonwealth's economic outlook is increasingly bright.

Fewer Pennsylvanians are looking for work than at any time since August 2000. The commonwealth's unemployment rate is the lowest since 1976. Tax collections are nearly 3% higher than anticipated, with about \$1 billion more in revenue generated than expected, a major factor in securing a state budget void of new tax increases.

These are incredible indicators of a strong, growing economy. A key driver of this shared economic growth is the development of our region's world-class energy resources. Shale development continues to create family-supporting jobs, generate hundreds of millions of dollars in annual tax revenue, and attract investment in our manufacturing sector.

Pennsylvania's oil and natural gas industry supports more than 300,000 direct and indirect jobs and contributes \$45 billion to the commonwealth's economy, according to a PricewaterhouseCoopers analysis.

As the Public Utility Commission announced recently, Pennsylvania's tax on natural gas development, the impact tax, generated \$252 million last year, bringing the eight-year total to nearly \$1.7 billion in new revenue. This effective tax, which is levied on top of all other Pennsylvania business taxes, provides revenue to county

and local governments in all 67 counties, benefiting roads, bridges, emergency preparedness, environmental protection, green space and parks development, rails to trails, social services and tax reductions, to name a few.

While job growth and the associated increase in tax revenue are signs of a vibrant economy, consumers are the direct beneficiaries of the increase in domestic energy production. Based on PUC data, Pennsylvania households are realizing an annual average energy savings of \$1,100 to \$2,200. Increasing Pennsylvanians' disposable income gives the broader economy a boost, as consumers can inject additional dollars into the economy.

Likewise, expanding shale gas development bolsters other industries, particularly those that are energy intensive. Ready access to affordable natural gas has lowered costs for manufacturers, spurring a manufacturing jobs revival.

From Pittsburgh to Philadelphia, we are seeing new job opportunities, growth and investment in a sector that's the backbone of our economy. Significant projects are underway, thanks to the abundance of affordable natural gas and natural gas liquids, including the construction of the Shell Petrochemicals Complex in Beaver County and the \$200 million expansion of the Marcus Hook Industrial Complex in Delaware County.

We are witnessing the extraordinary modernization of our power generation sector, as \$13 billion will be invested in Pennsylvania by 2021 for the construction or retrofitting of clean, efficient combined-cycle natural gas power plants.

By developing sound, strategic policies, Pennsylvania has an unprecedented opportunity to leverage its shale-enabled energy advantage to add \$60 billion in economic growth, more than 100,000 jobs and billions in state tax revenue, according to the McKinsey & Co. "Forge the Future" study.

We truly have a generational opportunity to realize shale's shared economic and environmental gains, but local, state and federal policies matter. The commonwealth's competition is not just Ohio, West Virginia or even Texas. We are competing globally for the capital investment needed to create jobs and expand our economy.

Pennsylvania is moving in the right direction, with all of us benefiting from the rising tide of economic growth. We are proud that our energy sector is a major factor to this success and look forward to capitalizing on the state's energy advantage by working collaboratively to encourage new investment opportunities in natural gas exports, advanced manufacturing and petrochemicals.

David Spigelmyer is president of the Pittsburgh-based Marcellus Shale Coalition.

[Return to Top](#)

ONE-MAN SHOW
07/20/2019
Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

Local governments have executive and legislative branches for good reason. Each has its own responsibilities and should serve as a check on the other.

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But as the Post-Gazette's Chris Huffaker reported last week, Allegheny County Council barely has a pulse. It's passed no substantive legislation this year, has no meetings scheduled for the next several weeks and spends much of its time rubber-stamping legislation submitted by county Executive Rich Fitzgerald.

Two candidates for council, Bethany Hallam of Ross and Liv Bennett of Northview Heights, think that's a disgrace. It is - and those now serving on the 15-member body should be embarrassed.

Council members are supposed to represent the county's 1.2 million people on critical issues ranging from parks to economic development to public safety, yet they bring virtually nothing to the table. Many policies and initiatives should originate in council, based on the input members receive in their districts, but Mr. Fitzgerald alone seems to be driving the bus. Two issues that were proposed to council - a civilian police review board and a natural gas lease registry - have languished.

Mr. Fitzgerald and others argue that council had a lot more on its plate during the transition to home-rule status 19 years ago. At that time, a three-member board of commissioners gave way to the council-executive structure. With that system firmly in place now, some have said, much of what council does is routine.

It shouldn't be that way. Council simply has become complacent on the watch of a strong-willed executive who doesn't like people second-guessing him.

Think about Mr. Fitzgerald's skirmishes with county Controller Chelsa Wagner, who repeatedly has shown the backbone to stand up to him. Recall how Mr. Fitzgerald split with a longtime ally, the late Barbara Daly Danko, and backed her opponent in a council race after the two disagreed about natural gas drilling. Daly Danko died before the 2015 election but still beat Mr. Fitzgerald's candidate.

There is a danger in the legislative body ceding authority and going silent, the route that Pittsburgh City Council also seems to be going.

Gone are the days of a feisty city council's battles with a brash young mayor, Luke Ravenstahl. Most council members now are allies of current Mayor Bill Peduto. The mayor's biggest critic on council, Darlene Harris, lost her primary re-election bid in May to a candidate Mr. Peduto backed.

The people deserve better.

Perhaps Ms. Hallam and Ms. Bennett will win their races and find a way to reset county council's compass. Council can be as influential as it chooses, and the county will be better run if each branch of government energetically plays the role envisioned in the home-rule charter.

[Return to Top](#)

Emissions at Valley plant concern EPA
Ethylene oxide gas released by B. Braun near LVIA linked to higher risk of cancer

07/20/2019
Morning Call, The

A medical device company suspended operations in a Chicago suburb for most of this year after mounting community pressure prompted the state to order the facility to stop releasing a carcinogenic chemical into the air.

But more than 700 miles to the east, a Lehigh Valley medical device company hasn't faced the same pressure to stop emitting the chemical - ethylene oxide - even though it released about 50% more of the chemical than the Sterigenics plant outside Chicago in 2016, the latest year with EPA emission data for both companies.

That may change as regulators and elected officials turn their attention to the issue.

B. Braun, a German medical and pharmaceutical device company with a plant in Hanover Township in Lehigh County, by Lehigh Valley International Airport, is the 12th-biggest polluter of ethylene oxide nationwide, according to EPA's latest cancer-causing pollution data. Ethylene oxide, a gas commonly used to sterilize medical equipment, is linked to breast cancer and non-Hodgkin lymphoma, among others.

B. Braun has broken no laws in its ethylene oxide emissions, which from 2008 to 2015 increased from about 1,900 pounds to 7,600 pounds, according to EPA data. The company is permitted to release up to 20,000 pounds of the gas per year, said Colleen Connolly, a spokeswoman with the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection. Since 2015, B. Braun's emissions have decreased each year to 4,660 pounds in 2018, according to the company and the EPA.

Sterigenics agreed Tuesday to drastically reduce ethylene oxide emissions to less than 100 pounds, paving the way for operations to resume, according to the Chicago Tribune.

The EPA says there may be an elevated health risk in areas where the possibility of getting cancer from breathing the polluted air over a lifetime is greater than 1 in 10,000 people. The agency applies that standard when determining which facilities need to reduce emissions. On July 10, the EPA contacted the DEP with its concerns about ethylene oxide emissions from B. Braun, Connolly said. DEP likely will inspect the facility in the coming weeks, including reviewing possible ethylene oxide leaks, she added.

In 2014, the data show that B. Braun accounted for 92% of all of Pennsylvania's ethylene oxide emissions, putting more than 41,000 residents near its plant at a higher risk of developing cancer under the federal standard.

B. Braun, whose U.S. headquarters is in Bethlehem, is using technology to control and reduce its ethylene oxide emissions, said Carroll H. Neubauer, chairman and CEO of B. Braun Medical Inc. in Bethlehem. The company - one of the largest employers in the Lehigh Valley with about 2,000 workers - develops, manufactures and markets medical products and services to the health care industry.

"B. Braun's highest priority is the health and safety of our employees, our community, and millions of patients who depend on our medical products," he said in a prepared statement. "We would not operate our facility if we believed our operations created an unsafe environment for our employees or our neighbors."

The EPA has changed its view on ethylene oxide in recent years. In the last decade, research has shown a stronger connection between the chemical and cancer, prompting the agency in 2016 to change ethylene oxide's classification from probable human carcinogen to human carcinogen.

"This means that EPA now believes EtO is considerably more potent for inducing cancer in humans than previously thought," Edward Nam, air and radiation division director for the EPA in Chicago, said in 2017 letter to Sterigenics that was cited by the Chicago Tribune.

One Hanover Township neighborhood immediately surrounding the airport - bordered to the west by the Lehigh River and to the east by Schoenersville Road, and including Route 22 - has a cancer risk from ethylene oxide that is greater than 200 times that of the state average risk, which is 2.4 per 1 million people. Nationally, that ratio is 1.3 in 1 million.

The EPA estimates cancer risk using a calculation that factors in emissions and weather patterns, among other things.

B. Braun pointed out that the EPA notes on its website that the amount of ethylene oxide in the U.S. isn't high enough to have "immediate health effects." The company said its chief medical officer found that cancer rates associated with ethylene oxide in the area around B. Braun are comparable or lower than cancer rates in other parts of Pennsylvania.

Exposure to toxic chemicals is just one factor that determine rates of cancer. Others include age, income and lifestyle choices, such as smoking and diet.

There's no national or Pennsylvania limit on ethylene oxide emissions, but companies need a state permit to emit a ton or more. Under ethylene oxide emission standards, which were set in 1994 and, according to the EPA, are expected to be updated this year, facilities permitted to emit the chemical must set up a system to vent the chemical. Factories that emit more than 10 tons have to have an aeration room.

Those rules don't apply to hospitals, clinics and other facilities that use ethylene oxide and emit significantly less than plants like B. Braun. But the EPA said recently that the agency intends to issue regulations for health facilities emitting

ethylene oxide.

In the Lehigh Valley, St. Luke's University Health Network is the only other ethylene oxide emitter. In 2014, it released 17 pounds of ethylene oxide from its Fountain Hill hospital, compared with 6,880 pounds that year for B. Braun. St. Luke's said it emits about 28 pounds a year now and has safeguards to keep employees from coming into the contact with the chemical.

"St. Luke's has always been conscientious about using ethylene oxide in a very limited capacity," spokesman Sam Kennedy said. "Its use is limited to terminally sterilizing medical devices that can't be sterilized by any other method."

Ethylene oxide makes up about 50% of all medical device sterilizations for products ranging from wound dressing to stents, according to the CDC. In the last two decades, however, some safer alternatives have emerged, including peracetic acid and nitrogen dioxide.

Lehigh Valley Health Network for example, uses ozone sterilization, which consists of hydrogen peroxide and oxygen and has no toxic emissions, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

B. Braun said it uses some alternative methods for sterilizing, however, certain medical products require ethylene oxide.

U.S. Rep. Susan Wild, D-7th District, said last week she will ask the CDC to study the effects of ethylene oxide pollution on Lehigh Valley residents. She is also joining a bill asking the agency to target toxic chemical polluters and alert affected communities.

"The health and safety of my constituents comes first and they should not have to worry that the air they breathe will make them sick, which is why I'm doing everything I can to get updated data on how the pollution from this chemical could be affecting our communities," she said in a prepared statement.

A number of elected officials, including Hanover Township Council Chairman Bruce Paulus, and some environmental groups were unaware of ethylene oxide pollution in the Lehigh Valley, as were several affected residents interviewed by The Morning Call.

B. Braun's manufacturing plant is in an industrial area, but just down the block from Hanover Township's Allendale neighborhood, with townhouses, a playground and a dog park.

Stephanie Rivera, 23, lives there and like many of her neighbors, has never heard of ethylene oxide.

Rivera, a cosmetology teacher, said she's worried about cancer-causing chemicals because breast cancer runs in her family. But she's not quite sure what to do about it.

"I don't even know what steps to take," she said.

A block from Rivera, Christina Brewer is growing plants in her house in hopes of improving the air for her 4-year-old son, Alex, a curly-haired energetic kid who has asthma.

Brewer said she doesn't pay too much attention to news and politics. But she was distraught to hear from a reporter about the chemical in the air around her.

"It makes my stomach hurt," she said. "There's got to be a better way for them to go about it."

Her neighbor Frank Johnson, a retired steamfitter and welder, is not worried at all. He's worked in refineries and chemical plants for most of his life. And at 59, he still smokes a pack of cigarettes a day. He also noted that everything from processed food to medication is potentially dangerous.

"You can't shield yourself from chemicals," he said.

The case of Sterigenics

Unlike the situation with B. Braun, which has brought no public outcry, emissions from the Sterigenics plant in Willowbrook, Illinois, had people up in arms.

A series of events converged to make Sterigenics a success story for environmental activism, said Dan West, a legislative advocate for the Natural Resources Defense Council.

Sterigenics is an international company that sterilizes products for the medical device, pharmaceutical and food industries. Last year, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services posted a study that concluded ethylene oxide emissions from the Willowbrook plant posed a public health hazard. The study referred to EPA air monitoring results that showed high levels of the chemical around the plant. The department did not conduct a similar study near B. Braun.

Public pressure and media attention prompted Illinois' newly elected Democratic governor to take a hard line against the company. And in February, the state's Environmental Protection Agency ordered the plant to stop using ethylene oxide until the company addresses the problem. That effectively shut down the plant's operations.

The health study and EPA cancer pollution data were released a few months before the contentious 2018 election, West said.

"It was the perfect storm of campaign politics, the timing of the release, the organizing energy of the community to get the members of Congress to do something," he said.

There's been similar community organizing in St. Charles Parish, Louisiana, where Dow Chemicals Co., is a top emitter of ethylene oxide.

However, the state's political leaders did not take action, West said.

In Delaware, a community group has lobbied legislators to better regulate facilities that emit the chemical after a New Castle company leaked 2,600 pounds of ethylene oxide because of a machinery malfunction last year.

Researchers have known ethylene oxide is linked to higher cancer risk for decades, said Dr. Marilyn Howarth, the director of University of Pennsylvania's Center of Excellence in Environmental Toxicology. In the 1970s and 1980s, people who used ethylene oxide in hospitals to sterilize equipment were getting cancer, she said. So hospitals began to sterilize equipment in sealed off rooms.

In 2016, research documenting high cancer rates in people who worked in facilities with ethylene oxide as well as rats exposed to the chemical prompted the EPA to recalculate the cancer risk associated with breathing in the chemical. That new calculation was reflected in the cancer risk data the EPA published in 2018.

Emma Cheuse, an attorney at Earthjustice, a nonprofit that litigates environmental cases, said the EPA needs to update its regulations for companies that emit the chemical.

"In the now 10 months since EPA released information about the serious problem of cancer-causing ethylene oxide pollution, EPA has failed to take the necessary steps to protect public health from this chemical," she said.

Howarth said state regulators also can step in to reduce the amount of ethylene oxide that companies like B. Braun are allowed to emit.

"Even when federal standards aren't decreasing emissions, Pennsylvania could take action to decide its citizens shouldn't have increased cancer risk," she said.

Pennsylvania's constitution guarantees residents the right to clean air, she said.

"Breathing air that puts you at 500 times the risk more than other people, is that breathing clean air?" she said.

There's not much people can do without regulatory intervention, said Jennifer Sass, a scientist at the Natural Resources Defense Council.

"If it's water, don't drink the water. You can't say don't drink the air," Sass said.

Air pollution can be invisible, added her colleague West, making it harder to recognize and rail against than, for example, Flint, Michigan's, brown water, which obviously was contaminated.

For those who live near B. Braun, Sass suggests keeping windows closed on bad air days.

"That's not a long term solution, you need air flow and air exchange," she said.

Eugene Tauber contributed to the reporting. Morning Call reporter Binghui Huang can be reached at 610-820-6745 or bhuang@mcall.com

[Return to Top](#)

Bethlehem tested drivers at crosswalks -the results weren't good

07/20/2019

Morning Call, The

Swimming pools, fireworks and family vacations are all hallmarks of summer. If you move in transportation circles, you can count a Bethlehem crosswalk safety program among their number.

For about 15 years, the city has conducted driver education programs by having volunteers - usually city employees but sometimes people with the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation or community groups - try to cross the street at well-marked crosswalks in various locations around the city. The crossings are timed so the pedestrian is in the middle of the road when the car reaches the intersection. The law gives the right of way to pedestrians in these cases; drivers need to wait for pedestrians to pass in front of them before moving along.

But they frequently don't. Many drivers apparently don't know right of way laws. I suspect some just don't care. Too many speed on through, forcing the pedestrian to stop or sometimes even jump out of the way.

That's why a small team of Bethlehem police were on hand Tuesday when the volunteers from the city, PennDOT, the Coalition for Appropriate Transportation and Lehigh Valley Health Network tested the corner of 12th Avenue and Broad Street. If a driver failed to stop, police would pull the driver over. According to PennDOT spokesman Sean Brown, 21 drivers received warnings. Another three were issued citations. Some drivers avoided getting anything because police were tied up with other motorists who failed to yield.

A week earlier at a similar event, a guy leaned out his window and screamed "You moron!" because Brown dared to cross in front of him. When police pulled him over for failing to yield to a pedestrian, they discovered he had a suspended license and no registration.

"We're here to educate people. We're not trying to penalize people," Brown said.

The posted speed limit on Broad Street is 35 mph, but the wide road and frequent turn lanes make drivers feel comfortable going much faster. Things went predictably terrible. After about 50 minutes, 20 of the 37 drivers - 54% - failed to yield to a pedestrian who was already in the middle of the road.

Getting drivers to recognize the crosswalks along Broad has been a longtime struggle for Sherri Penchishen, whose job at the city health bureau has her wearing a lot of hats, including overseeing the city's Vision Zero program. But Penchishen said the program has seen some improvements. The overall rate of drivers stopping for pedestrians improved since the program started more than a decade ago, she said. Drivers have become so accustomed to stopping for pedestrians at some crosswalks - like the one in front of the Hotel Bethlehem - that they no longer test it.

The program drew mixed reactions. An employee at a local business shook his fist at Brown and shouted something about karma, calling the exercise entrapment. I was across the street and couldn't make out everything he said.

His opinion wasn't shared by everyone. Lisa Diefenderfer, who lives nearby, endorsed the effort, saying police need to enforce speeding and crosswalks more along Broad. Children frequently cross the road to and from Nitschmann Middle School, she said, and she fears for their safety. Her landlord works directly across the street from her, but she drives there because drivers don't respect the crosswalks.

"None of the cars will stop for anyone," she said. "It's pathetic."

Tuesday's event focused on educating drivers, but Penchishen emphasized that pedestrians need just as much education. Many students are taught to look both ways before crossing - though some seem to forget those lessons, causing a problem a few years back outside Liberty High School.

I tend to agree. On my way back to The Morning Call's Allentown office, I encountered two pedestrians who jaywalked in front of me at the same light on two different crosswalks. At intersections with crossing signals, pedestrians are only supposed to cross when they have the right of way. Crossing halfway and waiting for a break in traffic exposes them to

more danger. I wound up slamming on the brakes when I had a green light, which could have led to an accident if there was anyone behind me.

Readers question VMT tax

I first wrote about a vehicle miles traveled tax as an alternative to the gas tax a year ago. With more efficient engines and electric vehicles becoming more common, gas taxes don't raise as much as they used to. This is a particular problem at the federal level, which hasn't raised the gas tax in almost 26 years despite the Highway Trust Fund going bankrupt in 2008. The last hike was so long ago that "Cool Runnings" was released into theaters the same day.

Some experts believe the best option would be to switch to a vehicle miles traveled tax, which essentially acts as a user fee. Instead of being taxed for how much gas they burn, drivers would be charged for the amount of miles they drive. The system strikes me as patently more fair, and I've been accepted into a study to test a GPS system that would attempt to track my travel and send me a pretend bill for the amount of miles I travel in Pennsylvania. This is only a test - there is no proposal to switch over to a system like this at this time.

But a few readers questioned the wisdom and feasibility of such a plan.

This tax - and removing fuel tax - would disincentivize vehicle efficiency, and the associated air pollution and gasoline consumption that come with low mpg vehicles. We can consider that CO2 released into the atmosphere is most closely tied to gallons of fuel burned. Incentivizing people to drive fewer miles would benefit air quality if MPG were equal, but it is not, and the range of vehicles out there spans 5-60 mpg, before even considering electric vehicles.

While hybrid and electric vehicles also contribute to road wear and tear, they don't weigh as much as large SUVs, dump trucks and 18-wheelers that consume more fuel. For example, would mopeds and some motorcycles that reach 80 mpg pay the same vehicle miles traveled tax? Would all classes of motor vehicles pay the same vehicle miles traveled tax?

If we're talking about cleaning our air and water, as well as road maintenance funding needs, but I don't see the direct benefit of this tax. I'd love to hear what else you can find out about the environmental and driver behavior side of this tax. - Scott Slingerland, director of the Lehigh Valley Coalition for Appropriate Transportation

Scott brings up some good points. I believe we should be pursuing cleaner technology - not only does it lessen our carbon footprint, but it's better for customers too. That said, the gas tax was established to maintain our roads, not to improve the environment. That's been a happy bonus.

A VMT tax would still act as a disincentive against unnecessary trips or scenic routes. And the rising cost of gasoline would still act as incentive for people to switch over to more fuel efficient vehicles.

The bigger fight, in my opinion, is on how aggressively we pursue fuel efficiency requirements as a nation. A lot of hoopla was made about President Donald Trump's rolling back rules set up by the Obama administration that would have required new vehicles meet a 46.7 mpg standard by 2026. The Trump administration is attempting to lower that to about 37 mpg as well as to dramatically lower the fine for companies that don't meet it. The auto industry said the Obama plan would have resulted in \$1 billion in fines, drastically increased the cost of their vehicles and resulted in major job losses.

For me, the bigger issue is how auto makers can still produce vehicles with lousy gas mileage. Some luxury brands like BMW, Bentley and Rolls-Royce just pay million dollar fines. Other car makers like Ford, Toyota and Chrysler get around the fines by offering electric or hybrid vehicles but sell tons of gas guzzlers - the fines are based on the fleet average. In my opinion, new cars that can't hit 20 mpg in 2019 shouldn't be on the road. I have no apologies for any 2019 Lamborghini Aventador Roadster owners out there who are getting 11 mpg on a car that costs twice the average home in the Lehigh Valley.

As for differentiating the tax for different vehicles, I support that, too. A moped puts a lot less wear and tear on the road than a tractor-trailer, so it's only fair the big rig get charged more. For something like this to work, I suspect it would need to be based off the vehicle's axles. There's a solution to be found there.

Why not get the mileage when a vehicle is inspected? Seems like an easy way to get the info and - more importantly - Pennsylvania already has this info. - Jill Hurt, Bethlehem

On first blush, using a car's odometer seems like a much better way to track how much wear and tear a vehicle is putting on the roads than installing tracking devices into people's cars. It avoids the intrusive Big Brother aspect that understandably alienates a lot of motorists.

But things get tricky when you take borders into account. Say my odometer shows I drove 13,000 miles a year. PennDOT may want to charge me a fee based off that mileage, but some of those miles were logged driving to the beach in New Jersey, attending a wedding in Massachusetts or vacationing in Maine. Pennsylvania has no right to charge me for miles I drove in other states.

I originally thought the feds could probably get away with the odometer reading, but I've since had second thoughts. Anyone driving into Canada or Mexico would be charged for driving on roads outside the country. That's unlikely to be a problem for most drivers in our area, but it becomes an issue for drivers in border states and potentially for long-haul truckers.

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[Return to Top](#)

Assam Floods: People Suffer Post-Flood Miseries in Lakhimpur District

07/20/2019

Sentinel, The

LAKHIMPUR: Though the present wave of deluge has receded in Lakhimpur district since Thursday, the affected people are facing a miserable plight. Most of the affected people, whose villages and houses were inundated by flood, have been compelled to live in an unhealthy environment after going back from the embankments. The people of Bongaon and Dowarpar under Pachim Telahi Gaon Panchayat (GP) in North Lakhimpur Revenue Circle have suffered a lot after going back to their homes from the Ranganadi embankment. The flood caused by the Ranganadi River due to release of the excess water from the catchment area of NEEPCO operated Ranganadi Hydro Electric Plant since July 7, ravaged the two villages penetrating through the unplugged guide dam of the Ranganadi right embankment. The siltation caused by the flood has turned the residential houses of over 60 families under Dowargaon and over 20 families under Bongaon unsuitable for living.

In addition to these villages, flood caused by the same river severely affected Moluwal, Santipur, Kathal Pukhuri, Sapekhati, Nagargaon, western part of Pokadol under Pachim Telahi GP and Karatipar, Pub Amtola, Nepaligaon, Chengamari, Chitaldubi and Gamsuk villages. Siltation buried several hundred hectares of newly-planted croplands in this agro-based area. Siltation further buried the individual household sanitary latrines, thereby creating a fear of environmental pollution in the upcoming days. Flood collapsed the communication system of the area too. As a consequence, the people of several villages are unable to avail the benefits of the free-of-cost health camps conducted at Amtola Health Sub-centre. Under these circumstances, the deprived people have demanded the district administration to hold the medical camps in each and every village of the affected area as these villages are prone to fever and diarrhoea and many other flood-related diseases. The guide dam was breached by the flood caused by Ranganadi due to massive releases of excess water in July, 2017. No initiative was taken during the past days in order to plug the guide dam despite consecutive prayers of the local people. As a result, the people of Bongaon and Dowargaon, along with several adjacent villages, had to face the NEEPCO-created flood fury again this year too. Simultaneously, the people of south Narayanpur are facing pure drinking water crisis. The flood caused by Subansiri River and Luit affected the road communication in several villages under Pub Narayanpur GP, Dakhin Narayanpur GP and Jamuguri GP. The livestock of this area have been attacked by post-flood diseases. Similarly, the people of Tarajuli village under Laluk are also facing pure drinking water crisis. The people of the village, which was damaged by the consecutive flood caused by the Gabharu River, have to drink water by digging shallow wells amidst the sand of the river basin. Flood has already damaged almost all sources of drinking water in this village along with the road communication system. The village is at present affected by erosion of the river. The Laluk regional unit of All Assam Students' Union supplied drinking water to the people of the village on July 18.

[Return to Top](#)

Heat wave heightens escaping fumes from fire-stricken PES refinery

07/17/2019

Philadelphia Tribune, The

Heavy rains and high temperatures shifted the lid of a 6 million gallon tank containing gasoline components at the Philadelphia Energy Solutions oil refinery, according to a spokesperson for the company. The incident caused fumes to escape, prompting complaints from nearby South Philadelphia neighbors.

The refinery is in the process of winding down operations after a fiery explosion tore through the facility last month. The financially troubled company announced it would close the facility within days of the blaze. Crude oil refining operations are expected to halt next week, according to Reuters.

Philadelphia's Office of Emergency Management sent an alert message through ReadyPhiladelphia to residents Wednesday afternoon telling them not to be alarmed by the fumes, and that odors may continue to be released as the shutdown continues.

But PES spokeswoman Cherice Corley said neighbors should not anticipate continued odors as a result of the closure.

"We will do everything we can to insure safe wind down of operations here at PES and not impact the community," Corley told WHYY. "The community is our priority."

No 'abnormal' pollution

Corley said the refinery is using hand-held air pollution detectors and stationary air monitors to measure volatile organic compounds, or VOCs in the air around the refinery. They haven't recorded abnormal levels of pollution, she said.

The Philadelphia Fire Department's Hazmat unit has also been on site measuring for chemical releases. A spokesperson for the city said their tests revealed no unusual chemicals or air pollutants.

"We have found no abnormal levels associated with this alert," said Noëlle Foizen, deputy director for the city's Office of Emergency Management.

PES is continually placing foam blankets on the roof of the tank to address the fumes. Corley said the rain and high heat have impeded those efforts. Workers are transferring the contents of the 6 million gallon tank to another vessel, which should be complete by the end of the day.

Daniel Harris lives two blocks from the refinery. He said he didn't get an alert or smell anything unusual.

"Just a little bit of fumes, but that's normal out there," he said.

Health Department spokesman James Garrow said the city is sampling for standard air pollutants, such as particulate matter and ozone, 24/7.

[Return to Top](#)

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07/21/2019

News & Advance Online

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[Return to Top](#)

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07/21/2019

Daily Progress Online, The

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[Return to Top](#)

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Virginian-Pilot Online

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[Return to Top](#)

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07/21/2019

Winchester Star Online, The

...which I feel no guilt. Nor do I feel guilty about the existence of the Chesapeake Bay that was formed some 10,000 years ago (which...

[Return to Top](#)

'It's a miracle plant' Long linked to oranges, Florida considers a lucrative future - with hemp

07/20/2019

Virginian-Pilot, The

The orange trees in the Corkscrew grove still produce fruit, though not nearly as much as they did just a decade ago. Due to hurricanes and pathogens, many are damaged and dying. Branches are spindly, leaves curled and yellowing.

"There was a time not too long ago that these trees were so full and green, you could hardly see through them," Michael Sparks tells Nikki Fried, the state's agriculture commissioner, as they survey the damage under a blazing hot sun.

When Sparks looks at the stressed grove, he sees an industry fighting for survival. Yet Fried sees something else: opportunity. And not just here but across Florida, wherever nature and disease have taken a serious toll on crops and commodities. Her solution is hemp. "Hemp can help," Fried says.

In a state inextricably linked to the orange - the fruit that adorns its license plates and the juice that it offers visitors at welcome centers - such prophecy might once have been considered heresy. But Fried won office last year partly because of her pro-pot campaign. Touting the benefits of hemp and marijuana for personal health as well as Florida's economy, the lawyer-lobbyist narrowly defeated a seventh-generation farmer and became the first elected female commissioner of agriculture and consumer services since Florida became a state in 1845.

Fried has moved quickly on her signature issue ever since. She appointed the state's first director of cannabis and assigned staff to draft language clarifying what's legal under both federal and state laws when it comes to growing hemp. She wants Florida to be the country's hemp leader, both in production and manufacturing.

During her visit to Corkscrew, she explains her ambitions for the new industry to Sparks and the other citrus men showing her around. How much will the hemp industry be worth in the state, they ask.

"I'm seeing it as at least a \$5 billion industry," she replies.

How much farmland does she think will be converted to hemp, the group wonders.

"I'd say hundreds of thousands of acres," she says.

The growers don't challenge her pitch, but they glance at each other with raised eyebrows. Florida citrus, an industry that's been around for a century, covers 569,000 acres. It's worth \$7 billion and, after tourism, is the state's second-largest industry. Fried wants hemp to come in a close third. Her cannabis director predicts it could yield \$20,000 an acre - far more than citrus.

Other states have a big head start in hemp farming. Colorado is in first, with 12,006 acres planted. But even without any legal plants in the state, Florida leads in the manufacturing of hemp-based CBD products, according to the Florida Hemp

Trade and Retail Association. And the market in those infused oils, lotions, gummies, coffee and bath bombs is booming.

Fried has big plans for hemp. She says it might be used to make a new kind of plastic, a new kind of concrete, clothing, batteries. It might even help to solve Florida's algae pollution problem if it's used as a filter, she says. "It's a miracle plant."

Sparks, chief executive of the trade association Florida Citrus Mutual, agrees hemp could help buffer an industry that last year reported its lowest output since 1940. "Ghost groves" now stand where smaller growers have abandoned diseased orange trees.

"You can feel the excitement when [Fried] talks about it," Sparks noted after her Corkscrew visit. "She has a crystal ball that many of us have not caught up with yet, and certainly more exploration is needed. But it's something to be welcomed by Florida farmers."

Mark Wheeler is curious but cautious. His family has been growing citrus in Central Florida for four decades. Hurricane Irma, canker and the disease known as citrus greening hurt his groves, but he remains committed to oranges. Still, he says he's open to new ideas, including hemp.

"I can see folks experimenting with it, maybe plant 10 acres or so, diversifying a little bit," Wheeler explained. "But you really need to know where it will be processed and who the ultimate consumer is. Otherwise, you could find yourself behind the eight ball pretty quick."

Hemp farming, which Congress legalized late last year, can be a pricey endeavor.

A seed can cost from 50 cents to as much as \$10, according to Jeff Greene, vice president of the state hemp trade group. The average number of seeds needed to plant an acre ranges from 2,000 to 5,000.

"Right now, it's a supply-and-demand issue," Greene said. "That price will come down dramatically."

One other complicating factor is the fact that marijuana is illegal in Florida except for medical use. Hemp comes from the same plant as marijuana but has a smaller amount of THC, the psychoactive compound that causes a high. Only chemical analysis can determine the THC level that separates a hemp strand of *Cannabis sativa* from a "hot plant."

At several public workshops around Florida in June, industry advocates told Fried and her staff how they'd like to see the hemp business develop locally. Small farmers, big agriculture companies, marijuana fans and others weighed in on the myriad rules and regulations that must be presented to the U.S. Department of Agriculture before the federal agency will consider approving a state's hemp plan.

Fried is impatient to get USDA approval. "I'd like to see the first seeds in the ground in 2019," she said at one of the workshops.

No matter Fried's timeline or the federal response, she'll have to wait a bit longer. Nobody knows for sure which plants will do best in the state's various climates.

The sole legal cannabis farm in the state is in Homestead, at a University of Florida research station. It took lead researcher Zachary Brym almost five years to get permission to bring in seeds and plants from other states and countries. He and his assistants are tending two acres, testing for optimal growing conditions. They put their first seeds in the ground in May. So far, the seeds from China are producing the most robust-looking plants.

Yet, much more work and research are needed. What plants will be better for hemp fiber, for hemp seed and grain, for CBD? What plants will be off limits because of too much THC?

"I'm working as fast as I can," Brym said, looking at his small plot of land at the research center. "We'll get as much information and the best information to the farmers as fast as we can. Clearly, the enthusiasm in the state is there."

[Return to Top](#)

Martin Wegbreit column: Evictions ignore the societal costs they impose

07/20/2019

Richmond Times-Dispatch

Pervasive problem in Richmond

No problem in Richmond affects more people, more seriously, in more areas of their lives than eviction.

One major cause of evictions can be explained in eight words: Evictions in Virginia are too easy for landlords.

To evict, a landlord sends a notice. Six days later if the eviction is for unpaid rent, or 31 days later if the eviction is for some other reason, the landlord can file an eviction lawsuit in court. No attorney is needed. The court provides a free lawsuit paper. The cost to file with the court and notify the tenant is \$58.

The landlord gets a court hearing in three weeks. At least 75% of the tenants will not come to court, according to a survey conducted by the Central Virginia Legal Aid Society. At least 95% of the remaining tenants will not have an attorney, a study by the National Center for State Courts shows. At least 99% of the time the landlord will win.

The landlord immediately may ask for the Writ of Eviction. As soon as 11 days later, but usually 15 to 25 days later, the sheriff will evict the tenant.

If you were a landlord, why would you not do this? The landlord likely did not get paid. (At least 90% of Richmond evictions are for nonpayment.) The landlord has expenses ' mortgage, employees, management, maintenance, insurance, taxes. The landlord is not a social service agency and has no obligation to house people. The landlord operates a business to make money and show a profit.

Even a nonprofit landlord operates a business to not lose money. If too many landlords lose money, they go out of business. The shortage of rental housing becomes worse.

So evictions really are not that bad.

Except they are.

Because evictions ignore the social costs they impose, not only on tenants, but also on a society as a whole.

If you operate a factory, it is easier to make money if you pollute air and water rather than using pollution controls. It is cheaper to build cars without seat belts and safety equipment instead of installing them. Making pajamas flame-retardant costs more than not making them that way.

We recognize the social costs of pollution, unsafe cars and flammable pajamas. We don't allow businesses to pass those social costs on to the rest of us. The business has to absorb those social costs, even if the business makes less money.

But we don't do that for landlords wanting to evict. We ignore the social costs, allow landlords to pass them on to the rest of us, and make it easy to evict. Too easy.

An eviction directly and negatively affects a child's education. Ten of 18 Richmond elementary schools in neighborhoods with eviction rates above the city average are unaccredited. Six of seven Richmond elementary schools in neighborhoods with eviction rates below the city average are fully accredited. Eviction is an education issue.

The Richmond eviction rate increases as the share of the minority population increases, even when holding income and other factors stay constant. Eviction is a racial issue.

Eviction poses an immediate risk of homelessness and loss of personal property. An eviction judgment, or even the filing of an eviction lawsuit, makes it much harder for a family to rent again. It also might make a family ineligible for affordable housing.

Evicted families invariably move into poor-quality neighborhoods and housing. Evictions break up social support structures ' schools, churches, and nearby family members and neighbors. Eviction is a social issue.

For workers who get evicted, the likelihood of being laid off is 15% higher. Eviction is a jobs issue.

No problem in Richmond affects more people, more seriously, in more areas of their lives than eviction. As Matthew Desmond, the author of "Evicted," said: "Eviction is not a symptom of poverty; it is a cause of poverty."

So how do we reduce this cause of poverty? We have to make it as easy for a landlord not to evict than for a landlord to evict.

Richmond's voluntary Eviction Diversion Program, which should start between mid-September and early October, is a good ' but small ' first step. Between 300 to 500 tenants might have 25% to 50% of their rent arrears paid by the program, as long as they pay the first 25% of the arrears by the first court date, pay ongoing rent as it becomes due, and ' most crucially ' the landlord agrees.

But more is needed. More eviction prevention money to keep evictions from coming to court. More tenant-friendly court forms and procedures so fewer tenants fail to come to court. And more legal aid and volunteer attorneys to defend those tenants who come to court.

When not evicting becomes as easy as evicting, only then will we see eviction rates come down.

Martin Wegbreit is director of litigation at Central Virginia Legal Aid Society in Richmond. Contact him at marty@cvlas.org

[Return to Top](#)

What do I need to know when buying new windows?

07/20/2019

Richmond Times-Dispatch

Shopping for new windows means sorting through an overwhelming amount of numbers, options, performance factors and styles. But once you learn the basics, you'll work your way around the stats like a pro.

Before you dive too deep into the window-buying process, first consider whether your existing windows are nearing the end of their life span. Aluminum windows generally last 15 to 20 years; for wooden windows, its around 30 years.

Efficiency also plays a major role. According to the U.S. Department of Energy, heat loss or gain through windows is responsible for more than 25% of residential heating and cooling energy use. You can make a big difference in your energy bill by upgrading to more efficient windows.

Window labels

Two labels provide vital information on window performance: the Energy Star label and the National Fenestration Rating Council label. Don't overlook these. They tell you quite a bit about how much those windows can help you. The Energy Star label indicates the window meets energy-efficiency guidelines set by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Energy Star offers a climate-zone map online that helps you select the best products for the area you live in.

An NFRC certification label verifies that a window meets its standards and provides performance information. This label rates a window's U-factor, solar heat gain coefficient, visible transmittance and air leakage. These stats play a big role in how much energy you'll save.

Here's a rundown:

1. U-factor

Between .20 and 1.20. A window's U-factor is a measure of how much heat can escape a home by passing through the window. The lower the number, the better the heat retention.

2. Solar heat gain coefficient

Between 0 and 1. This indicates how much heat from sunlight a window can block. The lower the number, the less you'll spend on cooling.

3. Visible transmittance

Between 0 and 1. This indicates how much light the window allows into your home. The higher the number, the more light is transmitted.

4. Air leakage

Between 0.1 and 0.3. This refers to how much air infiltration a window product permits. The lower the rating, the less air will pass through the cracks.

Besides the window choice itself, the biggest decision you'll make with new windows is choosing who installs them. Make sure any pro you hire holds the proper license, bonding and insurance to do the work, and meets these qualifications:

Are they full-time window installers? Have they installed your type of window before? What certifications and manufacturer training do they have? What kind of warranty do they offer? Are they familiar with specific local and neighborhood rules governing windows?

Having windows installed doesn't have to be stressful.

Korolev Andrey/Dreamstime

Having windows installed doesn't have to be stressful.

Korolev Andrey/Dreamstime

[Return to Top](#)

In pursuit of the 'heretics' . . .

07/19/2019

Winchester Star, The

Does a new Dark Age loom?

With increasing frequency, the self-styled "Progressive" movement in America reminds me of the Catholic Church, circa 1231-1826, the golden age Statism when the Inquisition ran rampant. The Church developed a fantastic marketing strategy of first selling people on the idea that they should feel guilty over any number of acts or thoughts, then doubling their profit by selling them ways to absolve that same guilt.

The catalog of sins about which Americans should feel guilty according to "Progressive" orthodoxy has grown to the size of the old Sears & Roebuck annuals, and the first entry is simply being an American. This is especially so, if you are also male, white, affluent, and straight. I'm sure that I'm missing many more categories, but it is difficult to keep track of the various ways in which we may sin these days.

Guilt regarding climate change is especially popular. We've even been told that the world will end in 12 years if we don't stop flying in airplanes and eating meat, but call me a heretic, because I don't feel guilty about the fact that it's getting warmer, which is not a new phenomenon. Once upon a time, there were palm trees in what is now Canada (you can look it up), a fact about which I feel no guilt. Nor do I feel guilty about the existence of the Chesapeake Bay that was formed some 10,000 years ago (which is the blink of an eye considering the age of our climate) when rising sea levels at the end of the last ice age flooded the Susquehanna River valley. You can look that up, too.

Of course, the Progressives do call me a heretic, only their current pejorative is "denier" as in, climate change denier, and it is often said with the same amount of spit and venom that no doubt spewed from the mouth of the Grand Inquisitor. There are many other popular progressive pejoratives out there now including racist, homophobe, Islamaphobe, misogynist, etc., etc., but they all mean heretic. Herein is where the real identity politics lie.

Heretics, of course, are not just different; they are profane, and because by definition, anything profane threatens the sacred, then the treatment of heretics is of no concern. This is why Antifa is excused, and even cheered in some quarters. When you intimidate, and beat up a heretic, you're not really beating up a person. If you're on a mission from God, then casting out a few heretics is really but a minor mission. By extension, the facts that heretics espouse may be ignored. Or as Alexandra Ocasio-Cortez put it in January, "There's [sic] a lot of people more concerned about being precisely, factually, and semantically correct than about being morally right."

The fact that the earth revolved around the sun, was inconsequential in the face of the belief that it was the other way around, and so, Father Vincenzo Maculani da Firenzuola placed Galileo under house arrest for the rest of his life. In 1933, that is, 300 years after his condemnation, Galileo was finally cleared of heresy, and the Catholic Church admitted that they had made a mistake.

If the "Progressive" movement is viewed in light of Inquisitorial thinking, then the irrational opposition to, and hatred of, President Trump makes sense. For not only has Trump committed the sins of being a rich, white, Christian, male, he does not feel the least bit guilty about any of it. This makes Trump the Anti-Progressive, and his MAGA-hat wearing followers are demons to be cast out of restaurants or doxed out of neighborhoods. Trump supporters are not just people with whom you disagree, they are blasphemers and, therefore, there is no obligation to treat them as anything but a danger, and whatever facts they can muster be damned. Literally.

People are spiritual creatures; they believe for the same reason that they eat and sleep, because such activities are necessary for survival. The spiritualism of the "Progressive" movement is very simple, which is what makes it so attractive: Here are the sins about which you should feel guilty, but take heart! For the mere cost of your vote and lots of tax dollars, you may purchase absolution, and you always have the assurance that no matter what you do even if you make millions of dollars and fly in a private jet your transgressions are never as sacrilegious as Trump's and his fallen followers'.

We may be headed for a new Dark Age.

[Return to Top](#)

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[Return to Top](#)

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[Return to Top](#)

